

Letting Go Worksheet: Good Wolf, Bad Wolf

Understanding the Wolves

Inside you live two “wolves:”

1. *Good Wolf* – your calm, wise, present-moment self.
2. *Bad Wolf* – your reactive, anxious, protective self.

The “bad wolf” is your sympathetic nervous system in action. This is the part of you that activates your fight, flight, or freeze response. When it’s activated, it spikes your heart rate, tightens muscles, and floods your body with stress hormones. The paradox here is that the “bad wolf” is trying to protect you, not hurt you. Fighting it usually backfires: the more you resist, the louder and stronger it gets, because now it sees you as a threat as well.

Letting go isn’t about eliminating the bad wolf. It’s about acknowledging, thanking, and releasing it instead of trying to fight it by telling yourself things like “don’t think about it.” Telling yourself not to think about it is thinking about it. Instead, you can thank the “bad” wolf and let it go. Like leaves falling from a tree or a river letting water pass, you can allow the energy to flow without holding on.

Reflection Questions

When does your “bad wolf” show up?

How does your body feel when the “bad wolf” is active?

How have you tried to fight or suppress the “bad wolf” before?

What might change if you treated the “bad wolf” as a protector instead of an enemy?

Can you imagine thanking it and letting it go? How?

Ecotherapy Exercise: “Meet and Release the Bad Wolf”

Instructions

1. Go outside to a natural space where you feel safe.
2. Sit or stand comfortably, feet on the ground. Take a few deep breaths.
3. Visualize your “bad wolf.” Notice its size, shape, energy, and color. Don’t judge it.
4. Recognize its intention: it wants to protect you, even if its methods are uncomfortable.
5. Silently say: “Thank you for protecting me. I see you. I am safe.”
6. Visualize letting the wolf walk away or fade into the environment. It may help to picture a leaf drifting, water flowing, wind carrying it.
7. Notice how your body feels after releasing the wolf. Is there tension, lightness, or calm?
8. Spend a few moments grounding yourself in the natural surroundings: touch, listen, breathe, observe.

Prompted Reflection

How did it feel to acknowledge the bad wolf rather than fight it?

What changed in your body or mind during the release?

Did the wolf feel less threatening once you thanked it?

How might you use this practice next time the sympathetic nervous system spikes?

Integration: Letting Go in Daily Life

Journaling Prompts

Identify one situation today where your “bad wolf” showed up. How might you meet it differently next time?

What physical cues alert you that your sympathetic nervous system is activating?

How could thanking and releasing it change your responses over time?

Can you think of a recent moment where holding on made things worse?

Micro-Practice

1. Pause, notice tension, visualize the bad wolf, thank it, and let it go.
2. Ground yourself with one of your senses (sight, sound, touch) immediately afterward.

Optional Challenge

Each day for a week, notice one automatic stress reaction.

Practice the Good Wolf/Bad Wolf exercise outside, even briefly, to reinforce letting go.

This practice shifts your relationship with stress: the “bad wolf” isn’t your enemy. It’s a messenger. Acknowledge it, thank it, and let it flow away naturally.